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LIVABLE COMMUNITIES HANDBOOK

Land Use and Design Strategies for the South Bay Cities

Survey of Cities in Western U.S.

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The consultant team conducted interviews with planners in 35 communities in the Western U.S. The purpose of the interviews was to identify livable communities strategies that have been successful in cities with an urban form similar to the South Bay Cities. The communities were selected for interviews through various means. Some cities and counties had been identified in a previous JFA project for the U.S. EPA. Others were identified through a review of general livable communities documents. Three documents in particular were helpful in identifying candidate cities:

- A 1995 Air Resources Board publication entitled *Transportation-Related Land Use Strategies to Minimize Motor Vehicle Emissions: An Indirect Source Research Study*,
- A 1996 publication from the Center for Livable Communities entitled *Building Livable Communities: A Policymaker's Guide to Transit-Oriented Development*,
- The May/June 1999 issue of *New Urban News*, which includes a list of 156 new urbanist infill projects around the U.S. While many of these projects are located in large downtowns or on new greenfield sites, a number of them are in suburban communities similar to the South Bay Cities.

In addition, all interviews were concluded by asking the interviewee to name other communities that might have information useful for this project. Several more communities were identified through this process.

The intent of the survey was to focus on cities that exhibit an urban form similar to that of the South Bay Cities. All of the cities surveyed are essentially built-out, and contain a low- to medium-density suburban character.

The survey questions focused on three general topics:

- Policy strategies to achieve livable communities (including incentive programs)
- Design guidelines
- Specific livable communities projects (including the lessons learned from them)

The surveys were conducted in discussion format rather than as a formal interview. A list of "Discussion Points" was used to guide the interview. These are included at the end of this Appendix. A number of the communities provided copies of relevant documents such as plans, design guidelines, or municipal code sections. These are

listed in the References.

SURVEY SUMMARIES

Arizona

City of Phoenix, AZ, Carol Johnson

Phoenix is just starting to think about promoting mixed-use, and pedestrian or transit-oriented development. There is only one example of an urban village-style master planned mixed-use community in the city. They are looking to promote more of this type of development, but currently there is little market demand and few incentives for developers to build in this way.

City of Scottsdale, AZ, Martha West

Scottsdale has an older downtown that they are working to revitalize while maintaining its character. Since 1984, they have had an "incentive-based zoning ordinance." Under this program, developers can receive density bonuses for specified improvements like including housing or building underground parking.

Scottsdale requires one bicycle space for every 10 vehicle spaces, with a minimum of 4 bike spaces. The city has also established a program to promote shared parking. City code includes the percentage occupancy for each land use by time of day periods. This allows developers to easily estimate the amount of sharing they can expect from other uses, and reduce their new parking accordingly.

City of Tempe, AZ, Neil Calfee

Tempe has just seen the completion of their first vertically-integrated mixed use project, called The Brickyard. A second mixed-use project is underway. They feel that the key to success with these projects is close work with developers, and more neighborhood planning. By working with neighborhood groups, they have garnered community support for new development that has local-serving uses (like a video store, dry cleaner, market and café), and acts as a buffer between the downtown and residential areas. This neighborhood support is crucial in convincing the council to back a project.

City of Tucson, AZ, Roger Howlet

Tucson has numerous arterial streets fronted by strip mall development. One of them (Speedway Blvd.) was dubbed the "ugliest street in America" at one time, but has been

improved significantly. The city invested heavily in the corridor, buying up parcels on either side of the street, reassembling them and selling them off to developers. They also used transportation funds to make design improvements, like wider sidewalks and landscaping. Over time, the corridor has become revitalized, and surrounding residential areas are now experiencing reinvestment as well.

The biggest obstacle in their efforts citywide is opposition to higher density development. They find that it's important to educate developers on how to design a project acceptable to the public and how to then sell it to the public. The city has published comprehensive Design Guidelines that include sections on industrial park development and large retail development. Every zoning case requires a "design compatibility report" in which the developers are supposed to show how their project fits into the neighborhood. They are supposed to rely on the Design Guidelines, and they usually do because they don't want the city's planners to get involved in their project's design.

Tucson's Design Guidelines include a section for strip malls and large format retail. They include the following:

- Pedestrian access to the site should be separated from vehicle access (not in the driveway);
- Pedestrian paths should be distinct from the parking surface;
- Pedestrian paths should conveniently connect the main corridor and also side streets;
- "Pad" bldgs should not interfere with pedestrian access;
- Curb cuts should be reduced;
- Special design considerations for drive-thru facilities to make them more ped-friendly.

The Tucson vehicle parking requirements also include bicycle parking requirements by land use category. Bicycle parking is generally specified as a percentage of the vehicle spaces. Tucson allows reduced off-street vehicle parking for providing an interior open space. The amount of reduction is equal to twice the ratio of open space to GFA, up to a maximum of 8%.

California

City of Berkeley, CA, Margaret Cavanaugh

Berkeley reduces parking standards for development within a quarter-mile of a transit

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station. They have enforceable design guidelines for their downtown and recommended guidelines for several other areas. The city has charged developers a "transportation services fee" that is used in part to fund a transit/commuter information store.

City of Brea, CA, David Crabtree

Brea's once blighted downtown is being completely revitalized with assistance from the Brea Redevelopment Agency. The highlight of the new Downtown is the Birch Street Promenade - a pedestrian-oriented destination for restaurants, retail, and entertainment. When complete, the Promenade will feature 22 movie theaters, over 200,000 square feet of specialty retail stores and restaurants, and 46 loft apartments over commercial space. The apartments have rented very quickly.

City of Carlsbad, CA, Adrienne Landers

Carlsbad is trying to implement traffic calming and pedestrian-friendly street design in new master planned communities.

City of Chula Vista, CA

Chula Vista requires that new development complete a Design Element Checklist to reduce automobile use and emissions from new projects. This identifies land use and design elements that the city expects from new development, including pedestrian connectivity factors, higher densities near transit stops, bicycle paths and storage sites, reduced parking near transit, etc.

City of Daly City, CA

Daly City is a built-out, suburban community south of San Francisco. The city has two specific plans that promote land use mixing and transit-oriented development. They do not have any monetary incentive programs targeted at developers, but they do streamline permitting and reduce parking requirements by 20% for projects in certain redevelopment zones. One current project, the Pacific Plaza, will combine office space, hotels and retail on a pedestrian-friendly site within easy access of a BART station.

City of El Cajon, CA, Jim Griffin

El Cajon does not have any land use strategies or design guidelines that promote mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented or transit-oriented development. The city is currently reviewing a proposal to redevelop a large section of its downtown that may present opportunities for livable communities concepts.

City of Emeryville, CA, Diana Murrell

Emeryville, in the San Francisco Bay area, is seeing new retail, office and housing development on older industrial sites. The city has developed an Implementation Strategy to transform one of these areas, the West Park Avenue District, into a vital civic center neighborhood. Their strategies include a 3-tier development review process, with streamlined permitting for projects that meet a land use and design criteria list. The following tiers of review would be available to new projects:

1. Projects that meet all the specified design and land use guidelines can be approved by planning staff. A checklist was created to allow easy evaluation of the guidelines.
2. Projects that comply with substantially all the design and land use guidelines can be approved by the planning director.
3. Projects that do not substantially meet the regulations must go to the planning commission.

Emeryville has also created flexible parking requirements in order to attract new uses to older buildings that lack parking. Because space for parking lots is limited, projects that rehabilitate older buildings to a more intense use require only 1 space/ 1000 existing GFA. Any increase of floor space over the existing area is subject to the standard parking requirements.

City of Huntington Beach, CA, Mary Beth Broeren

Main Street in downtown Huntington Beach has been remade into an attractive pedestrian-oriented mixed-use community center. Most of the downtown is designated as a redevelopment area, and is covered by a specific plan. A number of successful mixed-use projects have been built recently or are underway. In some parts of the downtown, all residential projects *must* include ground floor commercial. The city is working to attract higher-end retail to the area. One current mixed use project is currently being built about 3 blocks from the ocean. It will have 45K square feet of office feet plus 42 townhouses.

City of Monrovia, CA

The historic downtown of Monrovia has been revitalized into a festive, walkable small-town atmosphere. It consists of a 5-block stretch of Myrtle Avenue fronted by small shops, a Vons grocery store, restaurants and cafes, and surrounded by apartments and condos. The downtown was fairly depressed in the 1970's, but city investment and civic involvement have turned it into a Southern California showcase for downtown revitalization.

City of Oceanside, CA, Rhonda Darling

Oceanside does not have any developer incentive programs to promote mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented or transit-oriented development, other than a density bonus for affordable housing. The city has streamlined its permitting process for live-work units.

City of Pasadena, CA, Patrick Clark

Pasadena is well-known for its vital Old Pasadena retail district. The Holly Street Village project was recently completed a few blocks from this district. It features 358 rental units and street level retail on a site that will eventually serve as a Blue Line station. The housing units in this project have all rented, but the commercial space has not done as well. Several other housing projects are proceeding in and around the downtown. The city does not have any specific policies or programs to promote mixed use or infill development, but they are currently considering some.

City of Sacramento, CA, Steve Peterson

Sacramento has incentives to promote infill housing in the downtown area. Residential infill projects can qualify for a waiver of the water development fee, a reduction in planning entitlement fees by 25%, and increased flexibility during design review. The city used to offer density bonuses, but they were not having much impact and were removed by the council. The city also reduces parking requirements for certain mixed use projects and for development within a quarter mile of a transit station.

Sacramento County, CA, Mike Winter

The Sacramento County General Plan identifies an "AQ15" policy designed to reduce emissions from new development by 15%. The County has created a draft ordinance to implement this policy, but it has never been adopted. The draft ordinance calls for new development to be assessed an air quality mitigation fee based on the development size. This fee will be reduced or waived if the development meets certain land use and design criteria. These criteria are spelled out in the draft ordinance, and include elements such as land use mixing, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and urban design features.

City of San Bernardino, CA

San Bernardino does not have any developer incentive programs to promote mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented or transit-oriented development. Their general plan does support such principles. A relatively high residential vacancy rate in the city makes it difficult to promote new infill housing or mixed-use projects.

City of San Diego, CA, Nancy Bragado

San Diego has a number of successful examples of transit-oriented development, and

the city has policies in place to support TOD and infill development. The city's zoning code includes an urban village overlay zone, a transit area overlay zone, townhouse zones, mixed use zones, and reduced parking requirements of 10 to 20 percent for development near transit.

San Diego Association of Governments (SanDAG), Kent Whitson

SANDAG has developed their own Traffic Generation Rates rather than rely exclusively on the ITE standards. These rates are used for new development traffic impact studies. They have completed a study of traffic impact of the Uptown District, a mixed-use, high density development built on a former Sears site. The development includes 310 dwelling units, a large grocery store, some office and retail space. The traffic impact study of the site shows slightly lower trip generation rates than comparable, single-use developments. The high popularity of the site may mask some of the transportation benefits.

City of Santa Ana, CA, Melanie McCann

Santa Ana produced the Bristol Corridor Specific Plan in 1991. The city used land taking to create linear parks along the arterial street. The Plan includes design guidelines for the corridor. The city is also attempting to revitalize portions of its "downtown." A vertical mixed use project with apartments and eating places is in development now (The Artist Village).

City of Santa Monica, CA, Amanda Schacter

Santa Monica has a number of incentives to promote housing and mixed use. Throughout the city, projects can receive a FAR bonus if 30% or more of the floor space is devoted to residential. In the downtown area, residential space is discounted by 50% when calculating the density of a new project. The city has design standards that promote pedestrian-oriented features in new development. The city is also planning a Transit Mall that will feature improvements to bus flow plus sidewalk and bus shelter enhancements.

City of Sunnyvale, CA, Fred Bell

Sunnyvale, a suburban build-out community north of San Jose, is just now developing a concept for redeveloping their downtown. There is currently a vacant shopping mall in the downtown area, and the city is hoping to transform this into a retail and office center around a proposed light rail station.

City of West Hollywood, CA, Hassan Haghani

West Hollywood is in the midst of a major reconstruction of the portion of Santa Monica Boulevard through the city. The city recently gained control over this state

highway from Caltrans. Before starting, they did a lot of preliminary surveys to determine what people wanted with the street. The vast majority wanted an improved pedestrian environment, so this is the primary intent of the reconstruction. The sidewalks will be widened considerably, and new trees, landscaping and bike lanes will be added. Residential streets connecting with the Boulevard will receive "gateway gardens" – chokers that reduce traffic speeds and provide landscaping. Intersection bulb-outs will bring passengers directly to buses in their traffic lane, improving bus flow. Santa Monica Boulevard itself will not be widened for cars, though they will add a few additional turning pockets in a few places.

The city also has a Commercial Revitalization Project that offers grant money for façade improvements. The project allows up to \$25,000 per building, and can fund 7 to 10 storefronts per year. Because the program is funded by HUD CDBG money, is only applied to the lower income areas of the city.

Colorado

City of Englewood, CO, Robert Simpson

Englewood, outside of Denver, is in the process of completely redeveloping a large regional suburban shopping mall site. The mall, built in the 1960's, suffered economically in the 1980's and was recently torn down. In its place, a new city center is being built. The project is centered around a large pedestrian plaza and next to a light rail station. It will include civic center buildings for city offices, a cinema, housing, a WalMart and other retail, plus parking for the rail station. The parking areas will be broken up by tree-lined pedestrian paths and internal streets, replicating the grid street pattern of the surrounding community. A key feature is shared parking – the total project parking was reduced by about 1/3 through shared parking. The city has developed design standards for "large format retail" that apply throughout the city.

The experience of Englewood suggests several strategies for revitalizing suburban retail. One is to carefully analyze your market advantages. Englewood is a medium density first ring suburb, with a median income below the regional average. It does not jump out as an attractive location to developers, but a closer look revealed a large untapped market. The second strategy is to educate developers. Surprisingly, many of them still think that people prefer to drive to large shopping mall surrounded by parking. Cities need to show them examples of more pedestrian and transit oriented projects that have succeeded in other places.

New Mexico

City of Albuquerque, NM, Bob Palsen

Albuquerque has produced useful design guidelines and standards for the creation of "village and community centers." These include suggested site plans for large format retail to minimize the impact of parking lots and improve the pedestrian environment. Maximum allowed parking spaces are set by land use. Developers can exceed the maximum only if they provide outdoor patios for dining, residential units over commercial space, or a parking structure. A parking lot must be traversed by one designated pedestrian walkway for every 50 parking spaces.

Oregon

City of Beaverton, OR, Bill Roth

Beaverton is a post-War suburb of Portland. They are trying to create a walkable town center in an area that is largely auto-oriented. They have recently included a new Multiple Use District in their zoning ordinance for this town center area. The ordinance clearly identifies the land use mix, density, site design and parking requirements that will make the area more pedestrian- and transit-friendly. For example, the zone sets for mixed-use or commercial projects a FAR minimum of 0.6 and maximum of 1.2. For residential projects, the minimum density is 30 units/acre and the maximum FAR is 1.2.

A large mixed-use project in the town center (called The Round) is currently underway, though encountering financing problems. This development will include 5-story office buildings, a hotel, a cineplex and housing with ground floor retail.

City of Portland, OR, Dennis Lackman

While much of Portland is unlike the urban form of the South Bay Cities, they have developed Community Design Guidelines that apply to the newer, more auto-oriented parts of the city outside of the downtown. These guidelines use photographs to illustrate pedestrian-oriented design techniques for suburban neighborhoods.

Washington County, OR, Steve Conway

Washington County is part of the Portland metro area. The county zoning ordinance features several "Transit-Oriented Districts" and identifies density and design requirements to make these places pedestrian-friendly. The minimum commercial

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density in these districts is FAR 0.5 (within a ¼ mile of a station), FAR 0.35 – 0.5 (a ¼ to ½ mile from a station) and FAR 0.25 – 0.5 (greater than ½ mile). There is no commercial maximum density. Residential uses also have minimum densities as well as maximums.

Texas

City of Austin, TX, George Adams

Austin has an incentive program that can reduce developer fees in exchange for fulfilling certain smart growth goals. The program is optional for developers. They use a Smart Growth Criteria Matrix to give each participating project a score. The criteria include proximity to transit, economic conditions of the neighborhood, land use mix, urban design and streetscape treatments. The size of the fee reduction depends on the score that a project receives. At the low end, a Level 1 incentive can grant up to 50% of developer fees. Larger incentives (Level 2 and 3) can grant an incentive equal to the net present value of the property tax increase over 5 or 10 years. This money can be applied toward development fees, or can even be used to offset developer infrastructure costs if large enough.

The program works like this. First, developers do an informal scoring of their project. Then they go the city's planners for consultation. It's very important to get the developers thinking about the Smart Growth Criteria early, since that's the only way to influence the project design. After revision, the project receives formal scoring by the city planners. Then it goes to the city council – they have final say in the granting of incentives.

The program was first adopted in 1998. A few projects used the Matrix at first, then there was a lull. Now they have 10 to 12 projects in the pipeline that are using it. The U.S. EPA has developed something similar as part of their Smart Growth Program. There are no other programs like this in the U.S. that he knows of.

Washington

City of Bellevue, WA, Julia Kruger

Bellevue is a suburb of Seattle. Over the last 20 years, downtown Bellevue has been transformed from low-rise offices and numerous surface parking lots to a high-density, pedestrian-oriented commercial center. Zoning in the downtown offers density or

height bonuses for developers that build pedestrian amenities. The city has Building and Sidewalk Design Guidelines for the downtown area, and sets maximum parking space limits for new development. The city has had incentives for downtown residential development since the early 1980's, but only in the last five years have residential projects been completed.

They use the "carrot and stick" approach to improving the pedestrian environment in their downtown. The carrot is their "amenity incentive program" of zoning. The code clearly defines how developers can earn a square footage or height bonus by providing specific pedestrian amenities. The amenities include an arcade, public plaza, fountain, sculpture, or pedestrian-oriented street frontage. The stick is the requirement for a minimum level of amenity. Bellevue also sets maximum as well as minimum parking requirement for their downtown, broken down by 16 different land use categories. They work with the regional transit agency to provide better transit service and less parking.

City of Federal Way, WA, Greg Fewins

Federal Way, in the Seattle area, developed largely in the 1960's and 70's. Today its commercial areas consist primarily of arterial streets fronted by low-density strip malls and large format retail. The city is trying to develop a city center. They envision a multi-use activity hub characterized by mid-rise office buildings, housing and retail. They have developed zoning code and design guidelines implement this vision.

City of Redmond, WA, Tim Trahimovich

Redmond recently saw completion of the Lion's Gate project, the first new vertically mixed use development in the city's downtown. The project features 200 apartment units over ground floor retail. The project has been very successful, and the developer has started two more mixed use projects in the area. The city cites strong market demand as the biggest factor leading to the development. The city had also recently increased density and height limits in the downtown, which facilitated the project.

City of Seatac, WA, Blake Lieberman

Seatac is a small, built-out suburb of Seattle, and home to the region's major international airport. The city is trying to capitalize on their vicinity to the airport for redevelopment options. They have proposed a downtown redevelopment plan that would create a city center around a light rail line.

City of Shoreline, WA, Kirk McKinley

In the Seattle area, Shoreline's "main street" is a busy arterial, Highway 99. The city is working to make the street more pedestrian-friendly and more of an attractive shopping destination. They have sidewalk and setback requirements to this end. They are also working to strengthen the perpendicular streets to create more of a grid

system. Currently, there are few crossings of Hwy 99 and this contributes to high vehicle speeds and difficult pedestrian crossings.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Nearly all of the planners contacted had an interest in livable communities and could point to local activities of relevance to this project. Many of them are attempting to create a walkable, mixed use "city center" in suburbs that are generally low density and auto-oriented. Most of these cities have had some limited success, though a few are just starting their effort.

Only one of the communities surveyed has a comprehensive development fee credit system designed to promote livable communities concepts. The program, in Austin, TX, offers developers the option to score their project using a livable communities criteria matrix, and their development costs may be reduced accordingly. Sacramento County has proposed a program that would assess an air quality fee on new development, and reduce this fee for projects that incorporate elements to reduce vehicle use. The program has not been implemented through city code. A number of other communities offer specific incentives to developers to promote certain community goals. Bellevue and Scottsdale have well-functioning density bonus programs that promote pedestrian amenities. Santa Monica has an innovative density bonus to promote downtown housing. A number of cities, including Bellevue, Daly City and Berkeley, reduce parking requirements for development near transit.

Many of the communities have design guidelines, including Albuquerque, Scottsdale, Tucson, Englewood, Beaverton, Portland, Bellevue, Federal Way, Santa Monica and Berkeley. Most design guidelines are written for the community's downtown or city center, though some have been created for other commercial areas. Englewood has design guidelines that apply to all large format retail. Portland's Community Design Guidelines apply to suburban commercial zones such as neighborhood retail stores. Tucson has design guidelines for large format retail and for light industrial development.

Many of the communities interviewed identified recent projects that can serve as examples of livable communities development. The cities of Tempe, Beaverton, Redmond, San Diego, Santa Ana, Brea, Huntington Beach, Pasadena and Berkeley have recent vertically mixed-use projects in areas of medium density. Englewood is seeing a large suburban shopping mall redeveloped into a mixed use town center.

Several cities are in the process of, or have recently completed, reconstructing a major auto-oriented arterial street in order to make it more pedestrian- and transit-friendly. These cities include Tucson, Shoreline, West Hollywood and Santa Ana.

Generally, the interviewees said the biggest obstacle to building livable communities

projects was residents' fear of higher density and/or traffic. A number of strategies were suggested for dealing with this. Good project design is obviously important if a project is to have an attractive appearance and blend into the surrounding neighborhoods. Several planners stressed the importance of working closely with developers, especially early on in the process. Some even suggested educating developers so they would be better able to win public support for their project. If neighborhood groups themselves lobby for walkable, mixed use development, this can be a powerful voice with city elected officials. Other cities identified obstacles such as lack of market demand in certain areas, lack of city money for improvements, and organized opposition by auto-oriented commercial uses.

DISCUSSION POINTS

General Questions

1. Do you have any type of developer incentive programs to promote pedestrian-oriented, transit-oriented, or mixed-use development? (If they say no, provide some examples. These could be monetary incentives like fee reductions or tax abatements, or non-monetary incentives like streamlined permitting, or things like reduced parking requirements). If yes, please describe.
2. Do you offer any density bonuses to promote specific community goals? If yes, please describe.
3. Do you have any policies to promote greater land use mixing? Please describe. Any policies to promote more transit-oriented development or transit-oriented development?
4. If yes to any of the above: What was the process by which these policies and programs were accomplished? Was there significant opposition, and how did you overcome it?
5. Do you have any design guidelines? If they have many different design guidelines, we are most interested in those that apply to auto-oriented arterial streets, light industrial parks, and big-box retail.
6. Are there any recently-completed or planned developments within your city that you believe are good examples of mixed-used development, high-density development, transit-oriented development, or pedestrian-oriented development? If so, describe. Get specific name of project(s). If they sound relevant, go to question 9 below.
7. What do you think are the greatest impediments in your community to achieving development features such as mixed land uses, higher densities, transit-oriented development, and pedestrian-oriented development?
8. Any other cities you would recommend talking to?

Questions Pertaining to Specific Projects

9. What is the land use /urban form surrounding the project? How does the land use/ design of this project differ from its surroundings?

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10. Were there any changes in city policy that encouraged the project?
11. Did city policy (zoning, parking regs., etc.) need to be changed to accommodate the project?
12. What were the greatest obstacles to overcome in the project? What strategies were used to overcome these obstacles?
13. Has this project been a catalyst for similar efforts in your city? Please describe.
14. Any other cities that you would recommend talking to?